

[View as web page](#)

# INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS ADVISOR

A RESOURCE FROM IHS LOCAL HISTORY SERVICES

[LOCAL HISTORY SERVICES](#) | [INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY](#) | [PAST ISSUES](#) | FOLLOW LHS ON:  

Issue 10 | May 27, 2020

## SPECIAL EDITION COLLECTIONS MINIVISOR: CLEANING THE MUSEUM

By Karen DePauw, manager, IHS Local History Services

This is a short-term weekly mini version of Collections Advisor to give you some ideas of things to do from home to propel our work with museum collections. If you would prefer not to receive the weekly editions but would like to continue to receive the monthly Collections Advisor, please email [collectionsadvisor@indianahistory.org](mailto:collectionsadvisor@indianahistory.org) to let us know.

[APPLY FOR A HERITAGE SUPPORT GRANT](#)

### ONLINE RESOURCES

[Collections Advisors](#)  
(Indiana Historical Society, Local History Services)

[Collections Webinar Archives](#)  
(Connecting to Collections Care)

[Cleaning and Disinfection for Households](#)  
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)



[Cleaning at the Maennerchor Building.](#) (Indiana Historical Society)

As many of us prepare to welcome staff, volunteers, and even the public back into our museums, there is a lot to consider when it comes to keeping the space clean. So often we associate "clean" and "sanitary" with things like bleach and chemical disinfectants, however, we know that these types of cleaners are not safe for use on or around collection items. Nor are they safe on elements of historic house museums like antique door hardware and wooden handrails. Scientists across the globe have been researching the best ways to kill Covid-19 on surfaces and it appears one of the best solutions is still simple soap and water.

Using commercial disinfectants effectively often requires the disinfectant to be placed on the

surface and then left for a period of time before being wiped off. This is far too risky for historic hardware or wooden elements of a historic house. The best thing to do is follow this simple cleaning procedure:

- Create a solution of soap and water.
- Wipe down surfaces with soap and water solution.
- Follow up with a water-only rinse to eliminate any soap residue.
- Dry immediately.
- Repeat as necessary.

Use soap without any added fragrances, bleach, or other chemicals. Look for something advertised as "natural" or "free and clear."

This simple method of cleaning should help to protect both people and objects. Keep in mind that this is not a "disinfectant" so you should still practice general good hygiene. If a commercial disinfectant must be used, do recognize that it might cause harm to object finishes. Therefore, soap and water can be a good way to balance cleanliness and preservation.

\* Please note that this advice is NOT for cleaning historical artifacts in your collection. Information regarding that can be found in [Collections Advisor Issue 102](#). This advice is for cleaning areas that may be historical but are primarily used in some way by people, such as research tables, historic house museum banisters, antique door hardware in historic houses, and so forth.

---

This is a free publication. Anyone may subscribe.

[Local History Services](#)

Indiana Historical Society, 450 West Ohio Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202  
(317) 232-1882 | [localhistoryservices@indianahistory.org](mailto:localhistoryservices@indianahistory.org)

**WE DO  
HISTORY.**  
INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Smithsonian  
*Affiliate*



PROUD MEMBER OF THE  
International Coalition of  
**SITES of CONSCIENCE**

Indiana's Storyteller™, Connecting People to the Past